

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife
1006 West Lake Street
Minneapolis 8, Minnesota

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

REPORT ON MIDWINTER WATERFOWL SURVEY

Numbers of waterfowl wintering in the North American continent are about the same this year as last year, according to an announcement made by the U. S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife at the North American Wildlife Conference in New York City on March 1, 1959.

This information is a result of continental midwinter surveys made throughout the four recognized waterfowl flyways--Atlantic, Mississippi, Central and Pacific--Canada, the United States, the Republic of Mexico and the West Indies. Participants in the survey included personnel of State and Federal wildlife agencies in Canada and the United States, the Department of Defense, and others.

Population trends from 1958 to 1959 indicate no significant change in the total numbers of ducks, geese or coots.

Showing increases this year over last year were blue-winged teal, green-winged teal, goldeneye and wood duck. No appreciable change was noted in the populations of mallard, black duck, gadwall, baldpate, pintail, Canada geese and snow geese.

Decreases were recorded for canvasback, Pacific black brant, blue geese and cackling geese.

Results of the inventory by flyways were as follows:

Mississippi Flyway

Total ducks up 2% from 1958
Total geese down 1% from 1958
Total coots down 2% from 1958

Washington
Mr. James
Mr. Parker
Mr. Quinn
Mr. [unclear]

Both redhead and canvasback showed decreases in the Mississippi Flyway. Canada geese showed an increase of 19%.

Central Flyway

Total ducks down 19% from 1958
Total geese down 28% from 1958
Total coots down 17% from 1958

Substantial decreases in blue, snow and white-fronted geese.

Atlantic Flyway

Total ducks - no change from 1958; however,
that population was the lowest in
the Atlantic Flyway for the previous
eleven years.
Total geese - down 9% from 1958.
Total coots - down 21% from 1958.

Canvasback and redheads showed decreases in the Atlantic Flyway.

Pacific Flyway

Total ducks up 10% from 1958
Total geese up 12% from 1958
Total coots up 24% from 1958

Canvasback, brant and pintail down in the Pacific Flyway.

Mexico and West Indies

Interrupted surveys over the past five years make interpretations of population trends from these countries difficult. Improved habitat showed increased waterfowl use in Mexico, whereas severe drought decreased waterfowl populations in the West Indies.

Summary

Although Pacific Flyway population increases offset decreases in the three eastward flyways, thus indicating total populations were maintained, waterfowl populations declined in the Central and remained about the same in the Mississippi and Atlantic Flyways. Traditionally, Pacific Flyway waterfowl have little interchange with other flyways.

About the same population of ducks are expected to migrate to the breeding grounds this spring; however, serious problems may lie ahead. Conditions on the wintering grounds are quite favorable this winter but latest reports from the breeding grounds are far from encouraging. Given heavy March snows over the Canadian and United States Prairies, there is sufficient breeding stock left after the hunting season to make a strong comeback. Given continued drought over the prairies, ducks could decline very rapidly. The weatherman holds the key.